

# The Writing Center

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## Invention for the Research Paper

Don't begin your research paper with a topic—begin it with a question. The answer to your question will be the research paper. If you choose a topic, you can write forever! Here are some examples:

- one student who is an environmental studies major was curious about the quality of water in the Great Lakes. He asked, if the current level of pollution remains the same, will the Great Lakes survive?
- another student, an interior design major, was fascinated with how certain environments create peace or stress. She asked, what are specific ways I can enhance a room so that people feel relaxed in it?

## Exploring Your Question

This is a brainstorming exercise that asks you to shift perspectives in order to enhance your creativity. Answer the following questions to give you a sense of what you already know and how to go about finding what you need.

### Static View

What definitions, theories, ideas, and information on my question do I already know from experience, class lectures, and reading?

What are major subtopics?

Who are authorities in this area?

What kinds of information do I want to gather (from my research)?

What hunches or intuition do I bring to this project?

### Dynamic View

What do I know about the history of my subject?

What causes or effects do I know about it?

What do I need to trace (with my research)?

What cultural issues have been part of the history of this subject?

### Relative View

Under what headings or classifications would my subject fall?

What controversies or contrasting theories exist on my topic?

What relationships between my subject and other topics might be important?

What kinds of sources of information will I need to consult?

(Adapted from Four Worlds of Writing 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. by Janice Lauer et al)